

exercise of this faculty are a high wind, which prevents the differences in atmospheric density being perceived, and a constant monotonous noise, like the clatter of machinery or the rapid roll of wheels over a hard road, by which all echo is drowned. These make the real darkness. Hence, though many are able to ride with ease and safety, I never knew one who could drive in a carriage at all, and I do not think that will ever be feasible. I will also say that wheelbarrows, trucks, etc., left in the way by careless boys, are the blind man's bane. They make no noise, and have no voice of echo in them, nor are they high enough to give warning of their presence to any exposed portion of the skin; but humble and unpretentious though they are, they may prove a grievous cause of stumbling in the path of the peaceable pedestrian.

Save for these hindrances, which after all are no worse than being tied to a candle half of one's life, one may make sight quite easy to be dispensed with in most matters. Courage then, heartsick mother, dependent youth! The greater the odds, the more tempting the victory. Arouse ambition; strive, not to equal, but to excel what others do with better chances; at first in the little commonplaces of life, later in its more important work. What has been done can be; and what never has been done is not therefore impossible, but is rather the more worth doing.

Edward B. Perry.

Ministerial Bureaux.

IN most of the great Protestant communions in the United States much complaint is heard of a failure to utilize the ministerial forces. On the one side is a great array of vacant churches, on the other a multitude of unemployed ministers. Churches are begging for teachers, and preachers are praying for churches, and there seems to be no way of bringing the demand and the supply together. In the statistics of one religious body now before us, out of a total of 4016 churches, 941 are reported vacant; and out of a total of 3796 ministers, 1137 are "not in pastoral work." A large proportion of these last are employed as teachers, or as journalists, or in the work of benevolent societies, or in some other calling; nevertheless it is certain that several hundreds of them are available for the supply of the 941 vacant churches, if only the proper adjustments could be made. What a misfortune that so many flocks should be shepherdless, while there are so many shepherds searching for flocks!

A state of things quite similar exists in nearly all the Protestant denominations. The Methodists alone escape the reproach. It is their boast that every minister who desires to work is furnished with a field of labor, and that every church wishing a pastor is supplied. Over against the confessed disadvantages of their system, arising out of its imperfect adaptation to work in the larger cities, this great fact must be set. Some degree of freedom and flexibility may well be sacrificed to secure so perfect an economy of force. It is not likely, however, that any of the other denominations will adopt the itinerant system; it is much more likely that the Methodist church will relieve its stringency by important modifications; but it is a question often asked whether some advisory agency might not be contrived that would bring the idle ministers and

the empty pulpits into communication; and whether, in this way, the advantages of the itinerary could not be secured without suffering its drawback.

In the Protestant Episcopal church the bishop fulfills precisely this function; and it is probable that he accomplishes as much in this direction as is possible under any system which leaves to the local church unlimited power in the choice of its minister. The number of unemployed clergymen and of vacant parishes is smaller in this church than in any of the non-episcopal churches, and this is a strong reason for episcopal supervision. "A church without a bishop" has, beyond a doubt, many advantages; the liberty which it boasts is a great good; whether it more than compensates for the lack of episcopal oversight and direction is a question into which we do not propose to enter; we only wish to point out that the polity which the non-episcopal churches deliberately renounce works well in the matter now under consideration.

It has been proposed in some of the non-episcopal churches that each local ecclesiastical body—synod, or presbytery, or conference—appoint from its own members a ministerial bureau or committee of ministerial exchange, to serve as a medium of communication between ministers wanting churches and churches wanting ministers. One of the most distinguished of the Presbyterian ministers, the Rev. Dr. Crosby, of New-York, forcibly urged this plan in a lecture at the New Haven Theological Seminary. "The church," he says, "should have an organized system of bringing together unemployed ministers and vacant pulpits, by which, in a quiet way, consistent with the dignity of the church and the self-respect of ministers, churches will be able to act intelligently, without the pernicious practice of candidating. A committee should be intrusted with the delicate matter,—a committee of experienced and judicious men appointed by the chief ecclesiastical body of the district, and to this committee churches should apply, and on this committee ministers should rely."

This plan seems entirely rational and feasible; can any one suggest a serious objection to it? How great would be the gain, if the ministers who are now writing and traveling hither and thither in search of work, and the churches that are reaching out blindly after pastors, could be introduced to one another by some such judicious committee! No flaw appears in this reasoning, yet when the method is tried it does not succeed. The great Northern Presbyterian church, to which Dr. Crosby belongs, has made full experiment with it, and with discouraging results. This church would seem to possess, in its centralized organization and its admirable discipline, better facilities for the working of such a scheme than most of the other non-episcopal churches can command, yet a strenuous effort, continued through several years, to put it into operation, almost wholly failed. The presbyterial and synodical committees of supply were duly organized, and announced themselves as ready to mediate between vacant churches and idle pastors, but they have had little to do. Neither ministers nor churches resorted to them; the evil against which they were to provide is not abated; the "hungry sheep" still "look up and are not fed"; the starving shepherds still wait in the market-place because no man has hired them. The result of this experiment indicates, in the

words of a late temperate report on the subject, "that neither churches nor ministers can be brought, by any new form of machinery, to leave their concerns in other hands than their own. The committees are left idle, while the parties transact their business for themselves."

The reasons of the reluctance of churches and ministers to avail themselves of such an agency does not immediately appear. Is it partly a result of an overstrained independence—an excessive jealousy of ecclesiastical control? Is it due to a fear that the committee thus appointed would learn to domineer over the churches? Such an apprehension seems altogether irrational. The Episcopal churches appear to have preserved all their liberties of choice: they avail themselves constantly of the good offices of the bishop in the selection of their rectors; but it is probable that they are as free in their action as the churches of any other communion. The danger that an advisory committee, appointed by themselves year by year, would usurp authority over the churches in this matter, seems to be exceedingly remote. The fear of losing liberty sometimes degenerates into a ludicrous apprehension. "Give me liberty or give me death!" is a heroic sentiment, no doubt; but the man who prefers to die in the woods rather than surrender the liberty of finding his own way out by inquiring at the door of the wood-chopper's cabin, is a cheap variety of hero.

So far as the clergy are concerned, this unwillingness to make use of the ministerial bureau arises probably from a different cause. The larger number of these vacant churches are weak churches, and the unemployed minister hesitates to ask advice of such a committee lest they should commend him to one of these places where the labor is abundant and the support meager. To refuse such an opening would be ungracious; to accept it would imply a degree of self-denial to which he has not attained. Therefore he thinks it more prudent to keep his own counsel and conduct his own negotiations.

If such are the reasons which operate to dissuade the pastorless churches and the churchless parsons from availing themselves of this sensible provision for their mutual benefit, it is to be hoped that they may be reconsidered. A slight accession of common sense and consecration would be likely to make both parties willing to receive advice, and to agree upon some plan by which the neglected vineyards and the waiting laborers may be brought together.

In the absence of such a plan much labor of this nature falls on those who are already overworked. Home Missionary secretaries and superintendents in all the new States are necessarily burdened with such cares, in behalf of the feeblers churches. Yet even they might be relieved to a considerable extent by the cooperation of local committees. Every pastor of a prominent church, East or West, by no consent of his own, finds himself regularly installed as a ministerial bureau.

No small share of his time is consumed in mediating between idle ministers and vacant churches. If this work could be organized and subdivided, much relief would be afforded to a few very busy men.

In some of our larger cities local bureaux of temporary supply have been established. Ministers on their vacations, and ministers without charge, resort to these bureaux; and churches of the vicinity, needing supplies for their pulpits, make application during the week and take whatever is sent then on Sunday morning. Such a bureau may be a great convenience at times; but, considered as a benevolent institution, its indirect results are questionable. The value of such an agency cannot be estimated until it is known to what extent the churches are encouraged by its presence to neglect or delay the settlement of pastors, and to rely upon a hand-to-mouth provision for their pulpits which saves them considerable money; and also to what extent restless ministers in distant towns are led to resign their pulpits and make pilgrimages to the places where the bureaux offer employment. The comparison is rude, and may seem invidious; but, if things sacred may be likened to things profane, the establishment of such an agency may be said to operate, to some extent, like the opening of a soup-kitchen; and the wisest philanthropists are now agreed that the effects of free soup-kitchens are not salutary.

Washington Gladden.

Landscape-Gardening.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CENTURY:

Allow me to thank you for your "Landscape-Gardeners Needed for America," in your "Topics of the Time," for June.

The so-called landscape-gardener is in many cases not as intelligent as an ordinary every-day laborer; his object seems to be to have as many narrow and contorted walks as possible where they are not needed, to plant many trees and shrubs in the most inappropriate places, to make ridiculously-shaped beds, and to plant them with but one object,—to use as many plants as possible without regard to suitability. It is surely worth the attention not only of those engaged in the business, but of gentlemen who have country houses, to consider at least the fundamental features of landscape-work and landscape-art. There can be no stereotyped plans for the embellishment of grounds; each domain calls for different treatment and different grouping.

The natural surroundings should be the first consideration, instead of being, as now, often ignored. Unfortunately, we have but few good works which treat this important subject in a right manner; but, in spite of all this malpractice and ignorance, it is evident that we are progressing, though slowly.

John Thorpe,

Secretary of the New-York Horticultural Society.

